



teen challenge



INLAND

EMPIRE

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from

DOPE

addict

"I USED TO BE A DOPE ADDICT, addicted to heroin, but now I am a hope addict, addicted to the Word of God." These are his words NOW. Yet only God was willing to share the torture that ended there. It all began in the limbo of Childhood obscurity. But there was no obscurity about his first stretch in Lincolnale Boys' Reformatory in New York. His year spent there was the payoff on the investments made in the five years that led up to his sentencing.

SKIPPING SCHOOL WAS A 'KICK.' Sunday school and church was a 'drag.' Between nine and eleven a scurrying truant leap over the school yard fence into the park was THE thrill. In the meantime he nodded his way around the stories of David and Jonah as well as the enthusiasm of his Pentecostal connections. He had the connections but never 'scored' with Jesus.

A SPIRITUAL BAR MITSVAH OCCURED WHEN HE WAS TWELVE He left from childhood truancy into adult delinquency where a good time meant going out and getting drunk with the 'boys.' His novitiate as an adult delinquent lasted two years when one rum-soaked night sitting in a balcony of a dime a dance hall at 116th and Park Avenue in New York City, he smoked his first 'joint.' He stared in shocked horror as his mother's face hallucinated itself right into the balcony with him. Terrified! He ran, but not far enough. Mother turned him OUT of the dance hall but not OFF marijuana. Pot, rum and burglary brought him to the bar

OUR FATHERS, HAIL MARYS, AND INTERCEDING SAINTS were learned that year while his drug dependency deep ened. The year also gave him a new view of God as someone you use to bail you out of your troubles. He entered Lincolnale a thrill-seeker and left it a God-user. As soon as he hit the streets, he started fixing while upping his daily whiskey intake to a full pint. The ever increasing demand for more money forced him into armed robberies. In the midst of a now doubly loaded life a new urge made the scene.

SELF-DESTRUCTIVE IMPULSES threatened to annihilate him. They first appeared as an inner voice goading him to blast the brains out of a helpless holdup victim under circumstances that made escape impossible. Not long thereafter, loaded on pot, standing on the edge of the subway platform the light of the oncoming train triggered that same devilish voice within to say, "Jump, Jump....! just to see what would happen." As if he didn't know. Perhaps it was an act of God's grace that put him back in the reformatory at sixteen busted for armed robbery.

THE ELMYRA RECEPTION CENTER SHOCKED HIM with an indeterminate to thirty year sentence. The big time at last! Embittered, he wanted to play, but just as surely didn't want to pay. This enforced monasticism converted his Elmyra 'pad' into a God-user's prayer cell for the next three years. Released, finally, on

Street life was filled with emptiness and boredom. The void was shortly crammed with the old associations, the old drugs, and the old ways. Only one thing was different. "H" gained an ever increasing control of his life. This time a check forging caper landed him in the Danbury Federal Penitentiary. Another stretch resulted with the same God-using prayer neurosis and the same results. He walked out the gates a year later with an ever-growing bitterness towards God developing. His parole years were spent in exploiting his old habits and THE habit. It was a four hundred dollar a day monster that constantly demanded its junk ration or else! He had no choice. By now drug pushing was a survival necessity.

PUSHING LASHED HIM into a life of total terror! Narcos, pushers, users, police, friends, even family became enemies that could cut him off from his insatiable craving. His words were, "I had a habit that could not be controlled. I was in agony all the time." Two arrests later and fed up with his life a radical change beckoned as the only escape from the monkey on his back. Uproot! Move! A new start! California! "That's the answer," he thought. What disillusion! His California landlord was an alcoholic and the landlord's brother was a junky. Man-made transformation hadn't worked. Badgerlike he rode his slide to the ever beckoning stake at its bottom. He was picketed there eight interminable years before help finally came. Ironically, his pimp partner pointed her prostitute's finger in the direction of the Los Angeles Teen Challenge Center for men.



to HOPE a d d i c t

THE TRANSFORMATION TO HOPE ADDICT began with much misgiving. His drug supply exhausted, facing the torturous withdrawal, having neither 'bread' nor welcome mat at home to return to, imagine his consternation when the center greeted him with, "WE can't help you, BUT Jesus can." He'd prayed to God for years with no results. He'd had all manner of help from the best of correctional institutions and their psychiatrists. He'd had everything that man had to offer, and God had turned him down repeatedly. Now these wierdos were talking about a Santa Clause for heroin addicts by the name of Jesus. He had one other thing going for him --- no place else to go and no means of getting there. Filled with unbelief, skepticism, defeat and desperation he lay down on the bed assigned him to wait the dreaded twitching, vomiting and pain.

day he was as a man risen from the dead. Not a pain, not a twitch, not a tremor had touched his body. Instead his spirit was high. He was eating well and retaining it. His mind was clear. And he had a brand new sense of salvation and the power of God. Over three years have passed, and he's still waiting for that first sign of withdrawal. When first asked if he had been SAVED, what do you think his answer was? It was the down to earth experience of kicking a twenty year heroin habit without withdrawal that taught him the meaning of JESUS SAVES.

HE HAD CURSED GOD ANGRILY in the past. Now he heard others like himself telling how God performed miracles in answer to prayer. Unbelief was added to unbelief. It was impossible that the God whom he had cursed so often would have miraculous compassion on him and deliver him from withdrawals. It couldn't be. He didn't believe in miracles either. All that first evening a stuck record changer kept playing I BELIEVE IN MIRACLES over, and over, and over again. until, finally, one all compelling thought sunk itself into his unbelieving drug-fogged thinking. Maybe; just maybe, God COULD perform miracles. And then it happened. He prayed a prayer he had never dared breathe in his life before. "God, if it's true what this fellow is saying. If it's true what my mother said..., I don't want a miracle in my life because You know I don't believe in them. I just want You to help me take the sickness for the next three days that I should be able to take it this one time." Then he made absolutely sure that God couldn't misunderstand. He promised God nothing, and told Him so. With that he closed his eyes and promptly did the impossible. He fell asleep immediately.

HE WAS TURNED ON TO THE QUEST FOR THE SAVING JESUS. The Bible told of this Jesus, Consequently he became an avid Bible student. He who had formerly lived by the needle now began living by the Book. It was at this point that Ray Feliciano became a hope addict, addicted to the Word of God. Impetus was added to this 'habit' by the Bible itself when he was made aware of that promise and challenge of Jesus to give rest to the weary and heavy laden if they would but, "take My yoke upon you and learn of Me." The avid student became an avid learner. Upon graduation from the Latin American Bible Institute in La Puente, California, Ray joined the staff of Inland Empire Teen Challenge as its Bible teacher and director of street evangelism. He remains that type of student who daily translates the Bible into life challenging others like him to do so. Fittingly it is the Bible he uses to summarize his life story. "Lord, help me for I am in trouble. Mine eye is consumed with grief. Yea, my soul and my belly and my years are filled with sighing because of mine iniquity. My bones are consumed. I was a reproach among all my enemies, but especially among my neighbors. They that decieve me without; they fled from me. I am like a broken man; like a broken vessel out of mind. They devise a way to take away my life. I cried unto Thee. I trusted in Thee, O Lord, and You came to my help."

THREE UNBELIEVABLE SUNRISSES awaited him. Each caught him unawares. Each greeted him with a daily expectation that today withdrawal would begin. The third day was always the most torturous. Yet on that

WHAT HELP IT TURNED OUT TO BE! Praise God! We need YOUR HELP to continue this miracle ministry now more than ever. Pray and along with your prayers dedicate some summer DOLLARS FOR DOPER DELIVERANCE as God leads and enables.